

First Baptist Church
North East, Pa.

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District No. 5 Pennsylvania
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Historic American Buildings Survey
Karl E. Morrison, District Officer
319 Marine Bank Building, Erie, Pennsylvania

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
North East, Erie County, Pennsylvania

Owner.

First Baptist Church of North East.

Date of Erection

1859.

Architect

Unknown.

Builder

Unknown.

Present Condition

Fair.

Number of Stories

Estimated height 64' 1/2".

Materials of Construction:

Sandstone, wood, cast iron, brass etc.

Other Existing Records:

Erie County Court House, personal description from drawings and photographs, histories.

Additional Data-Bibliography

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Warner Beers and Co. 1884.

A Twentieth Century history of Erie County, Pennsylvania-Chicago 1909. The Lewis Publishing Co.-John Miller, historian.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. 2 Vols. Historical Publishing Company 1925. Topeka--Indianapolis, by J. E. Reed (John Elmer).

Nelson's biographical dictionary and historical reference book of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Erie, 1896. Two-thirds of this book by Benjamin Whitman. From the press of Wilson, Humphryes and Co. Fourth St., Logansport, Indiana.

Court House records.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Railroad Street
North East Boro, Erie County, Pennsylvania

The community of North East, Pennsylvania was called Burgettstown in 1819, its name was changed to Gibsonville on February 27, 1834 and when it was incorporated into a borough it was re-named North East. The First Baptist Church of North East seems to have suffered likewise from many changes. The first Baptist Society was organized in the township in the extreme eastern part, and in 1833 a small frame church building was erected about two miles east of the borough. This organization ceased to exist in 1850, but the same year Rev. Zebina Smith organized a new church within the borough. In 1859 the present church was built and in 1870 was enlarged and remodeled.

There are at least seven transactions in court records in regard to this church beginning in 1859, as follows: "Indenture made the 28th of February 1868 between Robert Graham and Eliza, his wife of the borough of North East, county of Erie, State of Pennsylvania of the first part, and the trustees of the first Baptist church of the borough of North East, (etc.) September 19, 1868. Sealed and delivered in the presence of S. S. Spencer (LS) recorded January 13, 1869." "June 20, 1859-Bester Town and Betsey M. his wife, and E. C. Heath, D. D. Loop, Amos Partridge, trustees and the congregation. June 30, 1859. Recorded January 13, 1869." "Recorded same date." "First Baptist Society North East and First Presbyterian Society North East, North East Baptist Society and First Presbyterian Society North East, also First Baptist Church and Society North East and Zebina Smith and wife." "Recorded February 1, 1872 First Baptist Church and Society North East Borough and J. N. Valley and wife, and January 16, 1888 First Baptist Church of North East and Peoples Savings Institution of North East Borough."

The First Baptist Society occupied a small log structure in the eastern part of the township. In 1832 a new congregation was organized who erected a building on the Buffalo Road, about two miles east of the borough in 1833. This society ceased to exist about 1850. A third congregation was established through the efforts of Reverend Zebina Smith in 1858. The present church building was put up in 1859 on Railroad Street, North East Borough. A Sabbath school-room was added in 1870. The Reverent Mr. Smith served the church as pastor about two years. The following pastors also served: Rev. L. Rathburn, Rev. Weatherby, Rev. Husted, Rev. H. N. Cornish and Rev. Charles Parson. A split in the congregation during the spring of 1895 resulted in a considerable loss of members. In April of that year 47 persons withdrew at one time.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The church itself seems a personification of age-old peace. It is built in the style of the Greek revival with Doric influence predominating in the older portion of the building. The foundation is of native cut stone. There are twelve windows in the church proper fitted with colored leaded glass. The doorway is placed in the center of the building facing the street, protected by a porch 6' 6" which extends outward. Two small pilasters are on each side of the porch entrance, two at the juncture of the porch with the main structure, each of which is 11' 6" in height. The doors are double entrance doors 6 1/2 x 11' 3 1/2" outside measurement, over which there is a paneled glass transom having five lights of plain white glass. On the lintels of the porch are two outside lamps with cast iron brackets. The two front windows of the church are colored leaded glass.

There are two Doric pilasters on each corner of the church front, the top parts of these pilasters being jointed and measuring 18". Two, part pilasters are above the entrance door. The inside doors opening into the body of the building are modern sliding doors, and the pews are also modern pews. The pulpit reets on a raised platform about 2' 1" high, enclosed with a chancel rail. This pulpit is carved in a style showing Gothic influence with the chancel chairs carrying out the same idea. At the extreme rear is the baptistry, hidden by rich draperies suspended under a carved archway about three feet in height of Persian effect supported by two Doric pillars.

The church is crowned by a steeple or bell tower whose base is square. Above the base is a 9' 3" octagonal tower with openings fitted with shutters, and an eight sided spire surmounted with a brass ball, pear shaped. The height of the spire is 18' 6" and the entire tower is 36'. The approximate height from ground to top of steeple is 64' 1/2". The spire is carried out in octagon shape to the top. The weather board siding on the front of the church is grooved, and the cornice has a plain frieze.

There is no especial historic value nor any record of any historic personages connected with the structure. Architecturally it is attractive on account of the details, relation and shape of the tower, and the general composition.

Anne Scott Baxter

Approved

Karl Morrison Dist. Off.
Oct 5, 1936.